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NBC BRIEFING

10 JANUARY 1956

BACKGROUND--POUJADE

I. Greatest "surprise" in tangled French political situation was unexpected success of Poujade movement at polls 2 Jan.

A. Poujadiste candidates got 2.4 million popular vote (or 11% of total): previous French Gov't prediction was perhaps 1.5 million votes.

B. Captured 52 Assembly seats: maximum pre-election guess was 15.

C. Yet Poujade movement's electoral campaign was marked by negativism: although movement has spelled out a program, Poujadistes made little effort to present platform to voters.

1. Instead, thumped for convening of "States General" (shades of 1789) to listen to "peoples' grievances."

II. Background of Poujade movement, itself, reveals little reason for such success at polls: leader is 35-year-old stationer from Saint Cere, in southwest France, [REDACTED]

25X6

[REDACTED] was later a Gaullist and

WW II Resistance member.

A. Poujade captured imaginations of petty merchants (small, self-employed shop-keepers, artisans, who are actually marginal economic group but fiercely proud of "bourgeoise" status) with attack on tax laws which, when actually enforced, put special squeeze on this group.

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- B. By March '55, Poujade claimed 800,000 followers, a war-chest of over \$1 million a year in dues.
- C. At that time, not only delayed Premier Faure's attempts to get special powers for revision of taxes, but actually forced government to ^{capitulate} "bustle" and change laws.
- D. However, in Apr '55 local elections, Poujadistes were soundly beaten at polls.
- III. Thus, Jan "surprise" is in part attributable to contrast with Apr '55 showing: also in part attributable to improved organization of movement itself in intervening months.
- A. However, generally agreed that spread between strength of movement itself and total popular vote (roughly, margin of million votes) attributable to floating "protest" vote previously given to Gaullist bloc.
- B. These protesters unwilling to vote Communist, but nonetheless resentful of instability, chaotic qualities of French Gov't.
- C. Also sympathetic with Poujade's violently-expressed anti-parliamentary attitude [redacted] [redacted]
- D. Bitter over national "shame" of Indochina, North Africa, such voters also attracted by ultra-nationalistic elements of Poujadism.

IV. As for future, Poujadiste Deputies represent many shades of political conviction: meeting scheduled for 14 Jan to define program for new Assembly.

A. Unless Poujade is able to maintain tight "party discipline," chances are that movement will eventually splinter, as was case with Gaullists.

B. In any case, quite possible that early Assembly sessions will be marred by Poujadiste roudyism.